

THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART

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FIRST CROPSEY RETROSPECTIVE
TO OPEN AT CLEVELAND MUSEUM

American landscape painter of nineteenth century is featured in touring exhibition

American landscape vision of a century ago will be the subject of a special exhibition which opens to the public July 8 at the Cleveland Museum of Art. The occasion is the first comprehensive retrospective of the work of Jasper F. Cropsey (1823-1900), whose depictions of the Catskill and White Mountain regions, the Hudson River, the New England seacoast as well as vignettes of farm and wilderness life made him a prominent member of America's first native school of painting, the Hudson River School.

Eighty-two of the artist's works have been selected and borrowed from forty-two private and institutional lenders by William S. Talbot, Assistant Curator of Painting at the Cleveland Museum. The exhibition, organized by the National Collection of Fine Arts of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, will be shown in Cleveland until August 16 before moving to Utica, New York and Washington, D.C.

Cropsey's drawings, watercolors and oil paintings reflect the artist's range of concern with Nature, considered at that time to be the paramount influence on man's existence. His plant studies demonstrate evocative skill with intimate details; he is equally expressive with the more bravura performances of Nature in his paintings of wilderness landscape.

His drawings are masterful in their use of delicate line and his watercolors show a sensitivity toward color while his oil paintings are vigorous in brushwork and especially noteworthy for their robust colors which set Cropsey apart from the green and brown color scheme used by many of his contemporaries. He gained a

considerable reputation during his long life for pictures of yellows and flaming reds of the New England autumn, yet he also created some lyrically poetic pictures of sunlight and atmosphere.

Cropsey was first trained as an architect in New York, and one of his accomplishments was the design of the stations for New York's Sixth Avenue Elevated Railway. Photographs of his stations as well as watercolors of other architectural projects are included in the exhibition. Several of the pictures come from descendants of the artist whose studio at Hastings-on-Hudson, New York, still contains many drawings, paintings and memorabilia which were important for Mr. Talbot's reconstruction of the artist's career, a task which has taken several years.

Cropsey traveled to Italy in 1847 and his paintings of Italian landscape and ruins are evocative of its history. A seven-year sojourn in England from 1856 to 1863 produced vigorous views of the rugged Dorset coastline as well as sunny scenes from the Isle of Wight. Paintings of American landscape after the Civil War reflect a heartening optimism and confidence in the potential of the land and its people. From the 1870's come subtle studies of sunlight shining through moist atmosphere as well as sensitive watercolors of the Hudson River.

Two of the paintings in the exhibition are over eight feet wide, vast panoramas of the Hudson River. Four sketches of Civil War soldiers are but four inches across. Between these extremes, in several media, Cropsey created visions of American landscape which implied far more than merely the out-of-doors. He painted America as it was in the process of discovering itself and his pictures played a role in the image of the country being formed by its people which still influences us today.

The Department of Art History and Education will supplement the exhibition with a series of gallery talks, four of which are to be given on Thursdays, by

Mr. Talbot. These are scheduled for July 9, 16, 23 and 30 at 3:00 p.m.. Other gallery talks will be given Sunday, July 12 and Wednesday, July 15 by Rita Myers as well as by Adele Z. Silver on Sunday, August 9 at 2:30 p.m. and Wednesday, August 12 at 1:30 p.m.. A full audio-visual program is also scheduled.

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